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ABSTRACT

A study compared college students' reading attitude to their achievement in reading comprehension. Subjects, 81 students enrolled in one of three college level reading improvement courses, completed the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM) and had their scores compared to the results of the reading comprehension test of the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Test (NJCBSPT). Results indicated that there was no correlation between reading attitude and reading achievement. (One table of data is included and the MBRAM is attached.) (RS)

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDE AND READING ACHIEVEMENT IN YOUNG ADULTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This study involved 81 college students from the college community. It was hypothesized that attitude toward reading is not correlated to achievement in reading comprehension.

An analysis of the results indicated that attitude has no significant relationship to reading achievement. The hypothesis, then, was supported.

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Table I - Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson r of a comparison of Mikulecky Behavorial Reading Attitude Measure (M.B.R.A.M.) and the New Jersey Basic Skills Placement Test (N.J.C.B.S.P.T.) scores.

Roettger, Szumczuk and Millard (1979) state that historically, research in reading has focused on the acquisition and measurement of reading skills and the improvement of reading instruction. Less attention has been directed toward the development and the measurement of students attitudes towards reading. Yet, it is assumed that a positive attitude is essential in learning to read successfully:

Schofield (1980) suggested that much of the research in the area of reading attitude is based on the assumption that "attitudes toward reading influence achievement in reading." Though a meaningfully strong casual relationship between attitude and achievement has been widely assumed to exist, past research in this field does not provide clear evidence for such a relationship.

Spache (1981) also states that despite a lack of any clear evidence to the contrary, teachers tend to believe implicitly that attitude effects reading achievement.

However, in the small amount of research that has been done on the relationship between reading attitude and achievement, the results are inconsistent. Askov and Fischbach (1973), Chall and

Feldman (Note 1), Groff (1962), and Nielson (1978) report significant positive associations between attitude and achievement; Rowell (1972/73) found few significant relationships; and at times an inverse relationship between attitude and achievement has been reported (Deck & Barnette, 1976; Greenberg, Gerver, Chall and Davidson, 1965).

Studies measuring the effect of attitude on reader achievement have utilized subjects from primary grades through high school (Roettger, et al. 1979; Walberg and Tsai, 1983). Research involving adult attitude toward reading has been completed sporadically since 1923 (Parson, 1923). Mikulecky, et al. (1979) note, however, that previous research has done little to examine a cross section of the adult population in terms of adult attitude toward reading.

Recent studies that have attempted to find a relationship between adult attitude and reading achievement have studied other variables that may have confounded the findings. (Abartis and Collins, 1980; Irwin, 1979). The present study limits the variables to young adult readers attitude and reading achievement.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that attitude toward reading is not correlated with achievement in reading comprehension.

Definitions

Attitude - the judgement of a person, object, or concept on an evaluation dimension - good vs. bad, favorable vs. unfavorable (Wyer, 1977).

Interest - a favorable or positive attitude toward a person, object, or concept (Alexander, 1984).

Course-Definitions

Communication Sciences 0410 - Study Skills Laboratory

A non-credit course given to students who score below 135 on the Reading Comprehension Subtest of the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Test (N.J.C.B.S.P.T.).

Communication Sciences 0411 - Reading improvement

A non-credit course given to students scoring below 165 on N.J.C.B.S.P.T.

Communication Sciences 1501 - College Reading and Study Skills.

A credit course given to students scoring above 165 on the N.J.C.B.S.P.T.

Procedures

Two sections each of C.S. 0410, C.S. 0411 and C.S. 1501 were used in the study during the 1989 Fall Session. The students were asked to participate in the study and to complete the Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure (MBRAM). The MBRAM took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Directions for completing the MBRAM were read to all subjects to insure uniformity of the administration.

The results of the MBRAM were tallied for each student. A numerical score was obtained; with a 5 denoting a very positive attitude toward a specific item and a 1 denoting a very negative attitude. Scores were totaled for all 20 items on the measure.

Individual student scores for the reading comprehension test of the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Test (NJCBSPT) were obtained for each student who completed the MBRAM. Scores for both the MBRAM and the NJCBSPT (Reading Comprehension) was then correlated.

RESULTS

As shown in Table I, results indicate a .02

TABLE I

Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson r of a comparison of the Mikulecky Behavorial Reading Attitude Measure and the New Jersey College Basic Skills Placement Test scores viewed.

Sample	M	SD	r
(M.B.R.A.M.)	60.95	12.93	.02
(N.J.C.B.S.P.T.)	150.67	10.72	

correlation between The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure and the Basic Skills Readng Test. The correlation of .02 shows a negligible or very low relationship. To be considered significant, a correlation of .32 would have to have been obtained. In the results of the 81 students surveyed using the Attitude to Reading Test, a 60.95 mean score was obtained which is just barely at significant level. To be considered significant the mean score would have had to be 61 and above.

The mean score for the N.J.C.B.S.P.T. showed a score of 150.69 which indicates a below average score for the 81 students with a competing level of 166 established by New Jersey State procedures.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study support the hypothesis of the study that attitude toward reading is not correlated to achievement in reading comprehension.

This indicates that attitudes toward reading had no significant relationship to reading achievement. Research indicates that very little has been done in the area of adult attitudes toward reading and reading achievement.

Since there were a few students who scored average or above average on the Basic Skills Test, but showed a poor attitude on the Mikulecky Test, it can be seen that a person can have a poor attitude toward reading, but still achieve a high score in reading.

Roettger (1980) recently noted there are groups of students who do not conform to expected patterns in that some who score quite high on a reading achievement test express negative attitudes toward reading while others, despite low achievement scores, have favorable attitudes.

While it is common belief that educators should foster positive attitudes toward and a love for readng among students, the results of this research doesn't lend credence to that belief.

Further studies need to be done in the area of reading attitudes and achievement in the adult populations to determine whether the findings of this study can be replicated.

ATTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT

RELATED RESEARCH

Alexander and Filler (1976), "there is little disagreement relative to the importance of positive attitudes in assuring maximal success with reading." (Dechant 1970) stated that the attitude of a student is often at the root of his or her reading difficulty and that the solution to the problem of the reluctant reader begins with a change of attitude. (Rowell 1967) quite aptly stated, "If improvement in reading skills takes place without a concurrent improvement in attitude toward reading, the progress is only partial and at best, may be of short duration." (Benton 1983).

If we truly desire to promote positive reading attitudes or at least reduce negative attitudes, we must be aware of student's present attitudes. (Epstein 1980).

Significant positive relationship between reading achievement and attitude toward reading has been previously found for primary students,(Johnson and Tismer, 1965), and high school students, (Cramer, 1975, Ketchum, 1976). The present study hypothesized that a similar relationship would be found for a college population. (Irwin 1979).

(Elliott 1982) however, stated that a review of the literature revealed very little research related to the attitude toward reading for the college level student. (Benton 1983).

(Cramer 1975) found a significant positive correlation between self-reported vividness of mental imagery and attitude toward reading in high school readers. (Irwin 1979). The present study is a replication of the Cramer study, using college students; 145 juniors and seniors who were each enrolled in one of three sections of a secondary reading methods course participated in the study as part of a course requirement.

Three standardized instruments were administered to the three sections at different times throughout the semester. The students were completely naive as to the purpose of the study.

These instruments were (1) The Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Form C (Brown, J. I., Nelson, M.J., and Denny, E. E., 1973, (2) the Questionnaire Upon Mental Imagery: Shortened Version (Sheehan, 1967) and (3) the Mikulecky Attitude Inventory (Mikulecky, 1976).

The results were as follows: A small negative correlation between reading achievement scores and self-reported vividness of imagery scores was found (rxy=-.1492). Moreover, this negative correlation was significant at the .05 level. It would seem that high ability college readers tend to report less vivid mental images than low ability college readers.

As predicted, there was a significant relationship between reading ability as measured by the total scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and attitude toward reading as measured by the Mikulecky Attitude Inventory (rxy=.4356, p=.0001). College students with good reading abilities seem to have better attitudes toward reading than college students with poor reading abilities.

The small correlation found between imagery scores and the attitude inventory scores (rxy=.1851) was not statistically significant at the .05 level. (Irwin 1979).

Bernard Schmidt 1959-1960 of Purdue University studied "Attitude toward Reading" and "Attitude toward English 185" (Developmental Reading).

The two attitude scales, "Attitude toward Reading" and "Attitude toward English 185", developed for the study were administered to approximately 700 first semester freshman students enrolled in English 185 during the last week of the Fall 1958 semester. The questionnaires were administered by graduate assistants under standard conditions. Approximately half of the students were asked to sign their names to the questionnaire and the other half were not. This was done in such a way that both groups were comparable in terms of instructors, academic ability (as measured by Purdue Placement Tests) and school enrollment. Thus, half of each of 24 instructor's student's were assigned to the anonymous group and half to the identified group. Moreover, each instructor's student's were divided so that each group would have comparable means and standard deviations on the Purdue Placement Tests in English and Math. Finally, because the pressures brought to bear on students to take English 185 differ among the schools within the University, the groups also were comprised of comparable proportions of students from each school. The results were as follows: (1) The Attitude toward Reading" items produced an internal consistency co-efficient of .87 while the "Attitude toward English 185" items produced a co-efficient of

.90 indicating substantial reliability. (2) On the "Attitude toward Reading" scale, the identified group had a mean score of 28.35 while the anonymous group's mean score was 27.57. The t-test of this difference showed that the identified groups mean score on the "Attitude Toward English 185" scale was 32.36 while the anonymous groups means score was 30.34. The t-test showed that this difference could have arisen by change fewer than five times in 100. In other words, the results show that signing names had little effect on the English 185 freshman students responses to a questionnaire concerned with attitude toward reading (Causey 1960).

Joan Elliott 1982 present study focus on attitudes of teachers toward reading. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

1. Examine the attitudes toward reading of graduate education students.
2. Compare attitudes toward reading with the attitudes of those who do not teach reading.
3. Determine whether undergraduate GPA's, Graduate GPA's, composite National Teacher Examination (NTE) scores, or attitudes toward educational research are significantly related to reading attitudes.
4. Determine if attitudes toward reading are significantly related to achievement in a course having heavy reading component.
5. Determine whether undergraduate GPA's, Graduate GPA's composite NTE scores or attitudes toward educational research are significantly related to course achievement.

Subjects were drawn from 83 students enrolled in five graduate sections of educational research during winter, spring, and summer quarter of 1983 at North Georgia College. Three students were repeating the course and were eliminated from the study, leaving a total of 80 subjects. All sections were taught by the same instructor.

Undergraduate GPA's were available for 76 students. Entering graduate GPA's at the beginning of the course were available on 59 of the subjects. (For 17 of the subjects, this was their first quarter in the graduate program, and data was not available for four transient students). For admission to the graduate program, North Georgia College requires the NTE, the Graduate Records Examination (GRE), or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). Forty-one of the subjects had composite NTE scores on record; six had NTE common scores; nine had the GRE's; ten had the MAT; ten students were classified as non-degree status, pending submission of one of these test scores; and four were transient students.

Attitude toward reading was measured by the 26 items likert-type scale developed by Elliott (1983). Her reading attitude scale is an instrument designed to measure the attitudes of college students toward reading in three areas: school related reading, recreational reading, and general reading. Elliott has reported the reliability of the instrument to be between .80 and .90 using co-efficient alpha.

Achievement in the educational research course was measured by two multiple-choice examinations constructed by the instructor of the course. Approximately one-half of the items were taken from the instructor's manual that accompanied the students textbook (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1979).

The reliability estimate of the midterm examination was .84 and for the final examination the reliability estimate was .87. Attitude in the course was measured by the Attitudes Toward Educational Research Scale (ATERS) administered on the last day of classes. To give greater assurance that the subjects would be truthful in their responses to this attitude instrument, subjects were told that their scores would have no effect on their grade in the courses and that, in fact the ATERS would not be scored until their grades had been turned in.

ATERS is a 50 item Likert-type scale, designed by Isakson and Ellsworth (1979), which measures teachers' attitudes toward educational research. The authors of the instrument have reported an internal consistency reliability of .92 using coefficient alpha.

Results of the study were as follows:

Data from this study indicates that graduate education students have a positive attitude toward reading. The mean score for these 80 subjects on Elliott's scale was 100.79 of a possible 150. Only 10 of the 80 subjects had scores below 78, indicating that they had a negative attitude toward reading.

It was hypothesized that the teachers who were currently involved in the teaching of reading would have significantly higher reading attitude scores than the teachers who were not involved in the teaching of reading. This hypothesis was supported ($t=1.92$, $df=78$, $p<.05$, one tailed test.

The average attitude score for the reading teachers was 104.70, and the average for the teachers not teaching reading was 96.87. Reading attitude scores were significantly correlated with Achievement (.36), ATERS Scores (.31) graduate GPA's (.30), and the composite NTE (.54). Readng attitude scores were not significantly correlated with the undergraduate GPA's (.09).

The composite achievement mean was 110.00 (out of a possible of 132), with a standard deviation of 14.48. The single best predictor of success in educational research, as measured by the two objective examinations was graduate GPA's (re=.62). Composite NTES, undergraduate GPA's the ATERS and reading attitudes were all significantly related to achievement (rs=.59, .46, .37, and .36, respectively. (Benton 1983).

Jerrolds, Benton, and McCutcheon (1975) have pointed out that because attitudes are partially emotional in their origins and often illogical in their manifestations, the relationship between attitudes and academic achievement are complex and unclear. (Benton 1983) (Jerrolds 1983).

Mikulecky et al. (1979) states that sporadic research about the reading preferences of the adult population as a whole has been conducted over the past several decades. He notes, however, that little research has attempted to systematically examine a cross section of the adult reading habits that include demands, ability and attitudes.

Early studies focus on reading habits rather than adult attitudes. Rhey Boyd Parsons began studing the general reading habits of adults in 1923. He interviewed 314 adults in Chicago and neighboring communities concerning their reading habits. He found the average number of minutes spent a day reading books in 1923 was 27.7; reading magazines, 241; and reading newspapers, 41.2. This could be loosely construed as a total of about 93 minutes reading time per day. Average time per day given to reading by males was 98.9 minutes and by females 76.7 minutes. Of these adults, 53.2% said they read in books each day, 76.5% read magazines; and 97.1% read in newspapers. Parsons also found evidence of the

fact that amount read varies with educational advantages. Parsons found a gender difference between females reading more than males and a positive relationship between educational level and time spent reading (Mikulecky et al. 1979). In summary, adults daily spent about an hour and a half, on the average, reading, in order of the most popular preference, newspapers, magazines, and books. The amount read was related to educational level (Mikulecky et al. 1979).

William S. Gray and Ruth Munroe surveyed the reading habits of 100 adult residents of Hyde Park, Chicago, and of 170 residents of North Evanston, Illinois in 1930. They also measured adult reading in terms of minutes spent per day reading. Their survey also attempted to find out where and why adults acquired books. They found adults reading, on the average, 90-plus minutes a day, a result very much like Parsons. Gray and Munroe found a gender and educational attainment differences as Parsons' as well as additional information that most adults purchased books and over half cited the recommendation of friends as the reason for reading a particular book.

The next major survey of adult readership (Waples, 1934). Douglas Waples in a survey of 6,850 residents of South Chicago during 1933-34 found several sources used by respondents to obtain reading material. The categories selected were friends, subscriptions, newsstands, drug stores, public library and bookstores.

The results showed that unemployed men and unskilled females obtained most of their reading materials from friends while professional men and women obtain most of their reading material from subscriptions: Waple's sample, which is considerably larger and better balanced than those of Parsons, Gray and Munroe shows some differences in sources of reading material. However, borrowing from friends was still of high importance, the relative importance of book stores or libraries as sources of reading materials had dropped considerably. Waples suggested such a result may have existed due to depression times.

In 1945 Henry C. Link and Harry Arthur Hopf conducted a national survey of the reading and book-buying habits of 4,000 adults. The adults were asked if they had read a book the day before, and only 21% of the 4,000 respondents replied they had. This figure is 132% lower than Parsons' 1923 figure.

Based on income levels, Link and Hopf found 64% of the upper income group were active readers (defined in the study as those who had read a book the day before or within the past month), while 48% of the middle income group were active readers, and 36% of the lower income group were active readers. They found, education to be the most important factor influencing time spent per day. However, borrowing accounted for the major method of obtaining a book. Link and Hopf found of the 1,982 active readers in their survey, 57% had borrowed their most recent book, 31% had bought, 11% reported it was a gift, and 24% did not know.

Link and Hopf found that proportions of those who borrowed and bought books remained stable across lower, middle, and upper income groups. The recommendation of a friend remained the major reason for reading a book (Mikulecky et al. 1979).

It was not until 1956 that any hint at adult motivation for reading was considered. Asheim (1956) reviewed several studies, he stated, "that not much more than one-quarter of the adult population reads even as little as one book a month." (Pg. 8) From his review of studies of adult reading he also found:

1. A far greater portion of adults between 21 and 29 years of age than adults over 50 years of age will be in the reader group.
2. More professional people and skilled workers than wage-earners or unskilled workers will be represented.
3. A higher percentage of persons in the upper than the lower income groups will be readers.
4. Most importantly, Asheim stated, "We know that the readers are the ones with the most education. Education is the major correlate of reading." (Pg. 13) Asheim also stated what seemed to be known about reading among adults as of 1955, women read more fiction than men, but men read more books on business and public affairs. Women tended to do more "recreational" reading than men; while men did more work related reading. In terms of total amount of book reading, "Women read more, but men read more seriously - for study, for reference, for vocational advancement." (Pg. 13)

He did not attempt to examine previous research results if gender or educational differences existed (Mikulecky et al. 1979).

Not until William S. Gray and Bernice Rogers studied the reading interests and purposes of adult readers in 1956, did it begin to move the research on adult reading attitudes and habits in new directions. They concluded that not more than 10% of adults voluntarily seek serious, challenging reading materials; that over 50% of the adult population read little more than the daily newspaper, a few periodicals of mediocre value, and an occasional mystery book; that another 30-40% limit their reading largely to immediate rewarding reading. Gray and Rogers believed that if educators better understand the interest, attitudes and habits of mature adult readers, they could begin to cultivate these same qualities in less able readers (Mikulecky et al. 1979).

In 1971, Amiel T. Sharon, while working with the Educational Testing Service, studied the reading habits of a carefully randomized national sample of 5,067 adults. He found that "the average American adult who can read spends one hour an 46 minutes reading on a typical day...The variability in reading time among adults, however, is great." Shaon's figures suggest a noticeable increase in reading time from Parsons' 1923 results and a still greater increase over the 1945 results of Link and Hopf. In addition, Sharon found that males read slightly more

than females (133 minutes versus 101 minutes). Thirty-three percent of the subjects reported that they read at work and those who did tended to have a higher socioeconomic status than those who did not. Whites in the survey read almost twice as much in a day as blacks. This racial difference in total amount of reading time also existed between lower income whites and blacks. Seventy-three percent of the adults interviwed said they read or look at a newspaper each day; 39% reported reading magazines; 33% books.

In addition, the Sharon Study noted that less than 1% of the adults surveyed reported difficulty with any type of material they had read. Persons with much formal education tended to read more than persons with little or no formal education.

The Sharon Study neglected to examine attitudinal and motivational aspects of adult reading habits, so no comparisons can be made with earlier studies. What seems evident from the Sharon Study is that, average adults are reading more. This finding can be perhaps be explained by an increase in job-related reading (Mikulecky et al. 1979).

Conclusion:

Several reasons can be explained to justify the need for measuring attitudes toward reading. Specifically, if one accepts the premise that attitudes influence learning and that attitudes toward reading are crucial in learning to read, then it is quite evident that educators should be aware of students feelings as they relate to reading. Reading after all, plays a central role in the students educational life, especially as the basis of learning most academic subjects. In recognizing its importance, Athey (1976) stated that "it seems logical to suppose that when a student finds reading a pleasurable experience, his positive attitude will readily become generalized to other school subjects."

Therefore educators need to do more detailed population studies if we are to learn more about the reading attitudes of adult readers. (Epstein 1980)

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MIKULECKY BEHAVIORAL

READING ATTITUDE MEASURE

MIKULECKY BEHAVIORAL

READING ATTITUDE MEASURE

by Larry Mikulecky

On the following pages are 20 descriptions. You are to respond by indicating how much these descriptions are either unlike you or like you. For "very unlike" you, circle the number 1. For "very like" you, circle the number 5. If you fall somewhere between, circle the appropriate number.

Example

You receive a book for a Christmas present. You start the book, but decide to stop halfway through.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

1. You walk into the office of a doctor or dentist and notice that there are magazines set out.

   VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

2. People have made jokes about your reading in unusual circumstances or situations.

   VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

3. You are in a shopping center you've been to several times when someone asks where book and magazines are sold. You are able to tell the person.

   VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

4. You feel very uncomfortable because emergencies have kept you away from reading for a couple of days.

   VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

5. You are waiting for a friend in an airport or supermarket and find yourself leafing through the magazines and paperback books.

   VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

6. If a group of acquaintances would laugh at you for always being buried in a book, you'd know it's true and wouldn't mind much at all.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

7. You are tired of waiting for the dentist, so you start to page through a magazine.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

8. People who are regular readers often ask your opinion about new books.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

9. One of your first impulses is to "look it up" there is something you don't know or whenever you are going to start something new.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

10. Even though you are a very busy person, there is somehow always time for reading.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

11. You've finally got some time alone in your favorite chair on a Sunday afternoon. You see something to read and decide to spend a few minutes reading just because you feel like it.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

12. You tend to disbelieve and be a little disgusted by people who repeatedly say they don't have time to read.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

13. You find yourself giving special books to friends or relatives as gifts.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

14. At Christmas time, you look in the display window of a book store and find yourself interested in some books and uninterested in others.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

15. Sometimes you find yourself so excited by a book you try to get friends to read it.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

16. You've just finished reading a story and settle back for a moment to enjoy and remember what you've just read.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

17. You choose to read nonrequired books and articles fairly regularly (a few times a week).

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

18. Your friends would not be at all surprised to see you buying or borrowing a book.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

19. You have just gotten comfortably settled in a new city. Among the things you plan to do is check out the library and book stores.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME

20. You've just heard about a good book but haven't been able to find it. Even though you're tired you look for it in one more book store.

VERY UNLIKE ME 1 2 3 4 5 VERY LIKE ME